

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 7878

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST SITUATION: WHERE DOES US GO FROM HERE

1. AS ISRAEL'S FORTUNES IN WAR ARE TAKING TURN FOR BETTER, MOMENT IS APPROACHING WHEN WE MUST DECIDE IF AND HOW US IS TO SEEK TO INFLUENCE ISRAELI ACTIONS AS THEY MAY AFFECT POSTWAR SITUATION IN AREA.

2. WE HAVE HEARD FROM ISRAELI CONTACTS THAT GOI IS INCREASINGLY BEING CRITICIZED PRIVATELY FOR NOT HAVING TAKEN PREEMPTIVE MILITARY ACTION BEFORE ARABS ATTACKED OCTOBER 6 OR/AND FOR NOT HAVING MOBILIZED SOONER. WE CANNOT JUDGE HOW WIDESPREAD THIS CRITICISM IS. HOWEVER, IF AS WE FEAR ISRAELI CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS IN THIS WAR, CRITICISM WILL SPREAD WHEN CASUALTIES BECOME KNOWN. AND WITH ELECTION APPROACHING, GOI WILL BE SENSITIVE.

3. THERE ARE ALREADY CALLS IN PRESS FOR ISRAEL TO ADMINISTER THOROUGH TROUNCING TO SYRIA AND EGYPT TO COMPENSATE FOR ISRAEL'S HAVING ALLOWED ITSELF TO BECOME VICTIM OF ARAB ATTACKS. CONCEIVABLY, PRESSURES UPON AND WITHIN GOI MAY MOUNT TO PURSUE ONE OF FOLLOWING TWO SCENARIOS:

(A) ISRAEL DRIVES ALL EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN FORCES BACK BEHIND PRE-OCTOBER 6 CEASEFIRE LINES, THEN IN HOT PURSUIT DESTROYS THEM INSIDE EGYPT AND SYRIA PROPER, AND OCCUPIES SOME
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ADDITIONAL TERRITORY;

(B) ISRAEL DRIVES ALL EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN FORCES BACK BEHIND PRE-OCTOBER 6 CEASEFIRE LINES, ENGAGES IN HOT PURSUIT IN SOME INSTANCES AND THEN PULLS THESE ISRAELI FORCES

BACK WITHIN PRE-OCTOBER 6 LINES, BUT THEN CONTINUES AERIAL ATTACKS ON MILITARY TARGETS IN EGYPT AND SYRIA PROPER FOR TWO OR THREE ADDITIONAL DAYS.

4. FROM US VIEWPOINT, MASSIVE ISRAELI DESTRUCTION OF EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN WAR MACHINES AT END OF THIS WAR OFFERS NO ADVANTAGES THAT WE CAN DISCERN. IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT PART OF DIFFICULTY IN ACHIEVING POLITICAL SETTLEMENT FOLLOWING 1967 WAR MAY HAVE RESULTED FROM ARAB FEELING ISRAELIS HAD BEEN LUCKY AND ARABS HAD NOT BEEN THOROUGHLY DEFEATED. WHATEVER THE CASE, ISRAELI OVERKILL IN THIS INSTANCE UNLIKELY TO HAVE EFFECT OF INDUCING ARABS TO COME QUICKLY TO NEGOTIATING TABLE.

5. DISADVANTAGES FROM US VIEWPOINT OF MASSIVE ISRAELI DESTRUCTION OF EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN WAR MACHINES - AND CERTAINLY OF ANY ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF ADDITIONAL TERRITORY - SEEM OBVIOUS: HARM WOULD BE DONE TO WHATEVER CHANCES THERE MAY BE FOR ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT, AND ISRAEL WOULD LOSE WHATEVER ADVANTAGE WILL OTHERWISE ACCRUE FROM GROWING INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF FACT THAT ISRAEL WAS VICTIM OF AGGRESSION IN THIS LATEST WAR.

6. OPTIMUM SCENARIO, AS I SEE IT FROM POINT OF VIEW OF US INTERESTS, WOULD BE FOR ISRAEL TO DECLARE FORTHWITH, BEFORE END OF WAR, THAT (A) ISRAEL WISHES IN THIS WAR ONLY TO DRIVE BACK EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN FORCES TO PRE-OCTOBER 6 LINES, NOT TO CRUSH EGYPT AND SYRIA; (B) ISRAEL WILL STOP SHOOTING ONCE THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED IF OTHER SIDE ALSO STOPS; (C) ISRAEL INTENDS TO OCCUPY NO ADDITIONAL TERRITORY; AND (D) ISRAEL WILL CONTINUE AFTER WAR TO SEEK PEACE SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT, SYRIA, AND JORDAN UNDER WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, ISRAEL WOULD WITHDRAW ITS FORCES FROM TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN JUNE 1967 WAR TO SECURE AND RECOGNIZED BOUNDARIES.

7. FOR REASONS STATED ABOVE, CHANCES OF GETTING GOI TO MAKE SUCH DECLARATION ARE PROBABLY NOT GOOD, BUT I THINK WE SHOULD
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TRY. ISRAELI DEPENDENCE ON US TO WARD OFF PRESSURES FOR CEASEFIRE BEFORE EXPULSION OF REMAINING EGYPTIAN FORCES EAST OF CANAL, AND ISRAELI NEED AFTER THIS WAR FOR ADDITIONAL MILITARY HARDWARE FROM US, ARE FACTORS IN OUR FAVOR. IF WE DECIDE TO GO THIS ROUTE, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD START CONSULTATIONS WITH ISRAELIS QUICKLY, SINCE MILITARY SITUATION MOVING RAPIDLY AND WE WILL NEED TO HAVE INPUT INTO GOI DECISION-MAKING PROCESS BEFORE POSITIONS IN CABINET ARE CRYSTALIZED.
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